

from

Protest and Survive

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Introduction Call to Mutiny Daniel Ellsberg

"It has never been true that nuclear war is 'unthinkable.' It has been thought and the thought has been put into effect." E. P. Thompson refers here, in the brilliant and moving essay that opens this volume, to the deliberate destruction of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. What he does not mention is that the Americans who conceived and ordered this project, like those who prepared it and carried it out and the great majority of the public who learned of it after the event, regarded the effects of the first nuclear war as marvelously successful. Such thoughts get thought again, and acted on.

The notion common to nearly all Americans that "no nuclear weapons have been used since Nagasaki" is mistaken. It is not the case that U.S. nuclear weapons have simply piled up over the years—we have over 30,000 of them now, after dismantling many thousands of obsolete ones—unused and unusable, save for the single function of deterring their use against us by the Soviets. Again and again, generally in secret from the American public, U.S. nuclear weapons have been used, for quite different purposes: in the precise way that a gun is used when you point it at someone's head in a direct confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled.

By Harry Truman's own telling, it was just seven months after Nagasaki that he so used the Bomb in the "postwar" world. As he recalled, the effect was immediately as successful as on the first occasion, with no need this time to pull the trigger.

The issue was, as it happens, Russian influence in northern Iran, where the Soviets were prolonging their wartime occupation and supporting separatist regimes in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, in pursuit of Russian oil leases in that area comparable to those of the British in the south. One version of Truman's account was revealed to *Time* by Senator Henry Jackson in January 1980, the week, by no coincidence, that the Carter

Doctrine was announced. *Time* gave the story the heading, "Good Old Days for the Middle East":

In a little-known episode of nuclear diplomacy that Jackson said he had heard from Harry Truman, the President summoned Soviet Ambassador Andrei Gromyko to the White House. Truman told Gromyko that Soviet troops should evacuate Iran within 48 hours—or the U.S. would use the new superbomb that it alone possessed. "We're going to drop it on you," Jackson quoted Truman as saying. They moved in 24 hours.

Truman's memory may be faulty in this recounting; Barry Blechman, who believes it was, reports at least seven public or private occasions when Truman discussed what he called his "ultimatum" over Iran, the earliest of these in 1950, but there are inconsistencies and a lack of any supporting evidence. This is not the case with any other of the episodes to be discussed below, for which this anecdote is, in the form Truman presented it, nevertheless archetypal.

The most recent of these, thirty-five years later, brings us back to the very same region and adversary. When outgoing Secretary of Defense Harold Brown told interviewers in January 1981, and President Ronald Reagan reiterated in February—using the same words—that what will keep Russia out of northern Iran and other parts of the Middle East in the 1980s is "the risk of World War III," the threat-strategy each was at the same time describing and implementing was somewhat more complex than that which Truman recollected, but not by much.

And there is no lack, this time, of corroborating elucidations of the nuclear component to the policy. A year earlier, in the weeks before and after Carter's State of the Union message announcing his "doctrine" for the Middle East, the White House almost jammed Washington talk shows and major front pages with authorized leaks, backgrounders, and official spokesmen all carrying the message that the president's commitment to use "any means necessary, including military force" against a further Soviet move into the Persian Gulf region was, at its heart, a threat of possible initiation of tactical nuclear warfare by the United States.

Just after the president's speech, Richard Burt of the *New*

York Times (now a high Reagan official), was shown a secret Pentagon study, "the most extensive military study of the region ever done by the government," which lay behind the president's warning. It concluded, as he summarized it, "that the American forces could not stop a Soviet thrust into northern Iran and that the United States should therefore consider using 'tactical' nuclear weapons in any conflict there" (*New York Times*, February 2, 1980).

Even before the president spoke, this same conclusion was reflected in White House backgrounders given to *Los Angeles Times* reporters Jack Nelson and Robert Toth. Heralding the president's message, "White House and other senior officials dealing with national security" told them that "if the Soviet Union carried its expansionism into Iran or Pakistan, the United States would have little choice but to oppose it militarily." These officials went on to say what the president, speaking to the public a few days later, did not put into words: such a war with the Soviet Union "would almost certainly become a nuclear war" (*Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1980). This information was the lead front-page story, under the headline "Russia vs. Iran: U.S. Ponders Unthinkable." The same story reprinted next day in the *San Francisco Chronicle* bore the headline, "Doomsday Talk in Washington."

The revelation in *Time* of Senator Jackson's old conversation with Truman, appearing on newstands the day before the president's speech, was part of this same chorus. It was particularly well suited to administration purposes—evident in the unusual publicity given to threats usually kept highly secret—of legitimizing and gaining public acceptance for the president's own policy. The Truman anecdote displayed a precedent of nuclear threats against the Russians, involving Iran (or really, in both cases, the transcendent issue of Middle East oil), invoking just the image of feisty, now-popular Harry Truman (re-elected against all odds, now enshrined in history after the lowest ratings in popular support until Jimmy Carter) that the president sought to associate with his own shift to a new Cold War: above all, a precedent of success.

But there was still another reason to evoke the memory of

Harry Truman in this context. For all the talk and posturing, for all the military analyses, plans, and recommendations, even the deployments, the question remained: Could the Russians, could anyone, come to believe that the president of the United States, if challenged, might really *carry out* such threats, accepting the prospects at best—if the war, improbably, stayed regionally limited—of annihilating the local population along with troops? Indeed, was he not bound to the contrary—as most Americans still imagine, quite falsely—by an explicit or at least tacit “no first-use” commitment, never to be the first to use nuclear weapons in a crisis or non-nuclear conflict?

It was the official function of William Dyess, assistant secretary of state for public information, to interpret the president’s meaning to the public in the week following the speech, and to address in particular just these questions. In an arresting exchange on television (*Newsmakers*, NBC Television, February 3, 1980) one day after Burt’s leak of the Pentagon study, Dyess answered the second question crisply and correctly, and the first as well:

Q: In nuclear war are we committed not to make the first strike?

Dyess: No sir.

Q: We could conceivably make an offensive . . .

Dyess: We make no comment on that whatsoever, but the Soviets know that this terrible weapon has been dropped on human beings twice in history and it was an American president who dropped it both times. Therefore, they have to take this into consideration in their calculus.

But the Soviets, better than most, know a good deal more than this about past uses and near-uses of U.S. nuclear weapons. What Dyess might have mentioned (but almost surely does not know) is that in the thirty-six years since Hiroshima, every president from Truman to Reagan, with the possible exception of Ford, has felt compelled to consider or direct serious preparations for possible imminent U.S. initiation of tactical or strategic nuclear warfare, in the midst of an ongoing, intense, non-nuclear conflict or crisis.

The Soviets know this because they were *made* to know it—often by explicit threats from the Oval Office, even when White House considerations of use of nuclear weapons was secret from other audiences—since they or their allies or client states were the intended targets of these preparations and warnings. Moreover, the Soviets will recall that the U.S. Strategic Air Command was established in early 1946 with the function of delivering nuclear attacks upon Russia when so directed, at a time when it was publicly proclaimed by the president and high military that the Soviet Union was not expected to possess operational nuclear weapon systems for a decade or longer. SAC’s only mission in that initial period—which included the formation of NATO—was to threaten or carry out a U.S. first strike: *not at all* to deter or retaliate for a nuclear attack on the United States or anywhere else.

It is not the Russians but the rest of us who need to learn these hidden realities of the nuclear dimension to U.S. foreign policy. As important background for the essays that follow and for much else, here, briefly listed, are most of the actual nuclear crises that can now be documented from memoirs or other public sources (in most cases after long periods of secrecy; footnotes indicate the most accessible references):

- Truman’s deployment of B-29s, officially described as “atomic-capable,” to bases in Britain and Germany at the outset of the Berlin Blockade, June 1948.¹
- Truman’s press conference warning that nuclear weapons were under consideration, the day after marines were surrounded by Chinese Communist troops at the Chosin Reservoir, Korea, November 30, 1950.²
- Eisenhower’s secret nuclear threats against China, to force and maintain a settlement in Korea, 1953.³
- Secretary of State Dulles’ secret offer to Prime Minister Bidault of three tactical nuclear weapons in 1954 to relieve the French troops besieged by the Indochinese at Dienbienphu.⁴
- Eisenhower’s secret directive to the Joint Chiefs during

the "Lebanon Crisis" in 1958 to prepare to use nuclear weapons, if necessary, to prevent an Iraqi move into the oilfields of Kuwait.⁵

- Eisenhower's secret directive to the Joint Chiefs in 1958 to plan to use nuclear weapons, imminently, against China if the Chinese Communists should attempt to invade the island of Quemoy, occupied by Chiang's troops, a few miles offshore mainland China.⁶
- The Berlin crisis, 1961.⁷
- The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962.⁸
- Numerous "shows of nuclear force" involving demonstrative deployments or alerts—deliberately visible to adversaries and intended as a "nuclear signal"—of forces with a designated role in U.S. plans for strategic nuclear war.⁹
- Much public discussion, in newspapers and in the Senate, of (true) reports that the White House had been advised of the possible necessity of nuclear weapons to defend marines surrounded at Khe Sanh, Vietnam, 1968.¹⁰
- Nixon's secret threats of massive escalation, including possible use of nuclear weapons, conveyed to the North Vietnamese by Henry Kissinger, 1969–72.¹¹
- The Carter Doctrine on the Middle East (January 1980) as explained by Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Assistant Secretary of State William Dyess, and other spokesmen,¹² reaffirmed, in essence, by President Reagan in 1981.¹³

Although the current warnings and preparations for nuclear war in the Middle East are the most public threats since the crises over Berlin and Cuba a generation ago, it follows from this listing that there has been no thirty-six-year moratorium upon the active consideration and use of nuclear weapons to support "nuclear diplomacy." Indeed, many of the recurrent circumstances were remarkably similar to the first use at Hiroshima.

In none of these cases, any more than in 1945, was there

apprehension among U.S. officials that nuclear war might be initiated by an adversary or needed urgent deterring. In most of them, just as against Japan, the aim was to coerce in urgent circumstances a much weaker opponent that possessed no nuclear weapons at all. In the remaining cases the object—already important in August 1945—was to intimidate the Soviet Union in an otherwise non-nuclear conflict.

And even against the Soviets most of these threats were seen as effective, just as the first two bombs were. U.S. marines, who had fought their way out of Chinese encirclement at the Chosin Reservoir without carrying out Truman's 1950 warning, were never finally assaulted at Khe Sanh, in 1968. The Chinese accepted and kept our 1953 armistice terms in Korea; in 1958, they ceased abruptly their daily shelling of Quemoy. The Russians backed down over Berlin in 1961 and again, spectacularly, in Cuba the next year.

Whether the nuclear component of U.S. threats to escalate the level of hostilities was actually critical to the behavior of opponents is not the issue here. (That question is still hotly controversial for the 1945 case itself.) What matters, if we are to understand this record, is that presidents *believed* that past and current threats had succeeded: this was why, as they understood it, they or their predecessors had not been forced to carry them out, and why they and their successors kept making such threats, and buying more and more first-use and first-strike nuclear weapon systems to maintain and increase the credibility and effectiveness of threats they expected to make in the future. It is why, after all, each president has refused to make a "no first-use" commitment, even when the Soviet Union has proposed such a commitment bilaterally.

The objection to these tactics is not that such threats cannot possibly "work." However, it is important to observe that most of these known incidents—and *all of the apparently successful ones* (except Khe Sanh)—occurred under earlier conditions of American strategic nuclear superiority so overwhelming as to amount to monopoly.

Thus, in mid-1961, the year of the projected "missile gap" favoring the Russians, the United States had within range of

Russia about 1000 tactical bombers and 2000 intercontinental bombers, 40 ICBMs, 48 Polaris missiles, and another 100 intermediate range missiles based in Europe. The Soviets had at that time some 190 intercontinental bombers and exactly four ICBMs: four "soft," nonalert, liquid-fueled ICBMs at one site at Plesetsk that was vulnerable to a small attack with conventional weapons.

When Kennedy urged the American people to prepare fallout shelters during the Berlin crisis that year, it was not for a nuclear war that would be started by the Soviets. Nor was it to avert Soviet superiority, nor to deter a Soviet nuclear first strike, that Kennedy fixed on the figure of 1000 missiles as the projected size of the Minuteman force in November of that year, well after the intelligence community had concurred on the conclusive estimate that the Soviets possessed less than ten ICBMs.

Officially, the precise figure cited above for Soviet ICBMs in the period from early 1960 to early 1962—four—is guarded as a classified secret today just as it was twenty years ago: the number presented in nearly all public sources—"about fifty"—is wrong by an order of magnitude. The true figure remains secret for the same reason as before: because public knowledge of the scale of the "missile gap" hoax would undercut the currently-necessary tactic of whipping up public fears of imminent U.S. "inferiority" to mobilize support for vastly expensive arms spending intended, in fact, to assure continued and increased—or in the present instance, regained—U.S. superiority.

The Soviets did acquire a large and growing ability to devastate Western Europe from the mid-fifties on (with short- and medium-range bombers and rockets). But (a) the ability to disarm the opposing superpower of its strategic forces in a first strike, and (b) the ability to retaliate against the homeland of the opposing superpower in a second strike, were both capabilities strictly monopolized by the United States until the late sixties. Not until 1967 did the Russians begin to put their ICBMs into "hardened" concrete silos and deploy advanced missile submarines, thereby acquiring the second capability and depriving the U.S. of the first.

For most of two decades, it is now clear, the Soviets chose

not to seriously challenge what amounted to U.S. strategic monopoly. But the cost to U.S. security interests of using that monopoly repeatedly, most dramatically over Quemoy, Berlin, and Cuba—while increasing spending sharply to maintain it and refusing to put a ceiling on U.S. technological superiority by a comprehensive, bilateral test ban on warheads or missiles—was to discredit Khrushchev's reliance on cheap bluffs and to help him lose his job. Brezhnev, displacing Khrushchev in 1964, seems to have promised the Soviet military to spend whatever it would take to eliminate inferiority. The Soviets proceeded to outspend the U.S. in the seventies, as they finally duplicated the huge investments in strategic capabilities that the U.S. had made in the fifties and sixties. In the course of the decade, they succeeded in buying "rough equivalence" or parity, thus drastically eroding the credibility of the U.S. first-strike threat, and along with it, the credibility of threats to escalate lesser levels of conflict if necessary to avoid tactical defeat or stalemate.

Americans are now being mobilized for a massive attempt to buy back these two lost pillars of U.S. foreign policy. The damaged credibility is to be partially restored by adding to our sizeable (and unique) antisubmarine capability the highly precise counterforce capabilities for a disarming first strike against landbased forces represented by the MX, Trident II, Pershing, and cruise missiles (with antiballistic missile systems and civil defense as logical and likely complements, when the public is ready). So far (July 1981) Congress is not balking at a projected price tag of several hundred billion dollars, even though the significant superiority sought (under the consciously deceptive public slogan of "avoiding inferiority") seems most unlikely to be achieved, in face of the evident Soviet determination to deny it.

Meanwhile, as the Nixon, Carter, and Reagan examples demonstrate, presidents continue to issue threats of U.S. nuclear initiatives, even in the era of superpower parity that has lasted now about a dozen years. The White House backgrounders cited earlier explain why, for the case of the Carter Doctrine. Thus the secret Pentagon study of U.S. capabilities in the

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Middle East is quoted by the *New York Times* as concluding: "To prevail in an Iranian scenario, we might have to threaten or make use of tactical nuclear weapons." The reason given is that the Soviets could move twenty-three divisions with 200,000 troops into their neighboring country within thirty days, confronting the 20,000 Americans and equipment that could be brought in by then with "more than a five-to-one advantage in forces." In the *Los Angeles Times* backgrounder, White House officials explained that even a local conflict with Soviet troops "would almost certainly become a nuclear war, because the United States has concentrated on its nuclear weapons rather than on matching the Soviet Union's massive strength in conventional warfare" (January 18, 1980).

Of course, as the leaked Pentagon study makes clear, even if the U.S. did match Soviet conventional strength in overall global terms, it could hardly aspire to do so in a region bordering Russia, any more than the Soviet Union, for all its vast army and growing navy, could ever hope to outweigh U.S. conventional strength on our own borders, in order, say, to block U.S. access to the oil in Mexico or Canada (or, for that matter, to protect states in the Caribbean or Central America from determined U.S. intervention). This regional disadvantage for the exercise of unilateral U.S. military power in at least the northern part of the Persian Gulf region would not be reduced at all by instituting the draft, or by enlarging a Rapid Deployment Force, or, indeed, by combat employment (as distinct from threat) of tactical nuclear weapons, with which the Soviet forces are well equipped.

It is in these unchanging circumstances that the deterrent tactic has recommended itself to a succession of U.S. administrations of *threatening* and preparing to initiate tactical nuclear warfare in the region, and to escalate if necessary, risking Soviet preemption or counter-escalation. In plainer language, the tactic is to threaten regional annihilation, with a link to global holocaust. Within their persistent frame of reference, these policy-makers see simply no alternative.

Nor is this true only of the Middle East. Look again at the list of nuclear crises. In fact nearly *all* of them, except for Cuba,

focus on countries bordering the Soviet Union or China (with Berlin actually within the Soviet zone of occupation). The current "dilemma" in the Middle East merely highlights the historical legacy of an earlier generation in which strategic nuclear monopoly permitted and encouraged the United States to claim rights to intervention in what amounted to a "sphere of predominant influence" that ran right up to the borders of Soviet or Chinese occupation *everywhere in the world*, including (from early 1946) northern Iran. Now, a decade after that monopoly has vanished, U.S. commanders-in-chief still feel compelled to defend and assure U.S. influence within that same immense, global sphere. They believe, and they are right to believe, they cannot do so everywhere without being ready to ignite thermonuclear war whenever "necessary."

Within that sphere of influence, the incentive to threaten or launch nuclear weapons to protect U.S. interventionary troops is not limited, either, to prospective confrontations with Russian forces. Again, the list of incidents above reveals a clear pattern. In every one of the half-dozen cases when U.S. or allied tactical units were surrounded or cut off and in danger of defeat—at the Chosin Reservoir, Dienbienphu, Berlin, Quemoy, Khe Sanh—the administration secretly gave consideration, far more seriously than was ever admitted to the public, to the use of tactical nuclear weapons to defend them. In the light of this secret history, it is worth reflecting on the potential nature of the Rapid Deployment Force, limited in size and equipment and intended for distant intervention, as a portable Dienbienphu. Perhaps its major function would be as an instrument of real and visible commitment to the possible first-use of nuclear weapons by the United States. Indeed, that is pretty much how its purpose is described, to a careful reader of official statements. Analogy is often explicit to the nuclear "tripwire" function of U.S. forces stationed in Western Europe.

In an interview in his first weeks in office (*New York Times*, February 3, 1981), President Reagan was asked if the U.S. was "capable, now, militarily of backing-up" his threat to "use arms to prevent any Soviet move in the Persian Gulf to cut off oil to the United States."

Reagan replied that what he called for, "is a presence in the Middle East. . . . Not the stationing of enough American troops that you say we could stop the Soviet Union if they set out to advance logistically; we know that we couldn't do that.

"What is meant by a presence is that we're there enough to know and for the Soviets to know that if they made a reckless move, they would be risking a confrontation with the United States."

Why wouldn't that be, he was then asked "an empty threat that the Soviets could see through?"

Reagan's reply: "Well, it's not—you don't just plant a flag in the ground and walk away and leave it. There would be Americans there. But I think there should be some kind of American presence. Well, we're doing it right now with the Navy in the Indian Ocean. But I think we need a ground presence also.

"But it's based on the assumption—and I think a correct assumption—the Soviet Union is not ready yet to take on that confrontation which could become World War III."

There are, currently, a few weak links in that threatened sequence, but measures to strengthen them are all included in the current defense budget. Production of "neutron" warheads, is one: with their relatively precise killing zone, they are "optimal" for close-in nuclear defense of protected troops (not only against tanks, not only in Europe). Precisely accurate delivery vehicles for such low-yield warheads as air- or sea-launched cruise missiles, are another.

But how might the Soviets be deterred from retaliating in kind, at least, to such short-range attacks on their forces (or on their allies)? Or, if some retaliation was unavoidable, how might it be kept to an "acceptable" level, the prospect of which would not deter the U.S. from the initial attacks? The Pentagon's answer is to be able to pose a threat of further escalation that is more credible than the Soviets can make.

This is where the Pershing and cruise missiles to be stationed in Europe come in, and precisely with reference to the Middle East. With their extreme accuracy, unmatched by anything the Soviets possess (an order of magnitude better than the Russian SS-20), these promise great effectiveness against military tar-

gets even with relatively small-yield warheads, which need not destroy nearby population centers. Thus, the theory goes, the Russians might be deterred from retaliating against a U.S. carrier that had just destroyed their forward units in Iran, by fear that the U.S. would then use the unique capabilities of its Pershings to eliminate "surgically" all the bases, depots, command posts, and reserves in Eastern Europe and western Russia that support Soviet Middle Eastern theater operations. The Pershings could (on paper) do this while leaving most Russian cities (and ICBMs) intact, thus daring the Soviets to start an all-out city-busting exchange by replying with their large-yield, "indiscriminate" warheads (all they have, supposedly). This they might not do, even in a retaliation limited regionally to Europe, for fear the U.S. might then take out their ICBMs and a good deal more, with the MX, Trident II, and air-launched cruise missiles newly bought for this purpose.

In the words of E. P. Thompson: "If all this sounds crazy, then I can only agree that crazy is exactly what it is." Yet there is a short-run, narrow-focus rationality, a certain coherent, if reckless, logic to the traps the Pentagon planners are so carefully setting for themselves, and all of us on earth. If they did not develop and deploy these new first-strike weapons, they could no longer even pretend that threats to initiate, or escalate nuclear war against Soviet forces were anything but hollow. But if they do invest several hundred billion dollars to achieve a first-strike capability, the Soviets could not be sure they had not convinced themselves they had succeeded.

If all these threats really were hollow, and if presidents were content to let this be perceived, the strategy would not be so dangerous; but then, it could not possibly succeed. Because they do rely on such means to protect what they see as vital interests, and because they do face up, in a sense realistically, to the credibility problem posed by the real craziness of the threats, decision-makers take positive measures to enhance that credibility. And these measures tend to be committing, that is, they actually do increase the likelihood that the threats will be carried out if they should happen to be defied.

Thus, the Carter Doctrine itself, the president's public pledge

of effective action ("any means necessary") has this effect. More concretely, nuclear-armed carriers are deployed to the area, where their vulnerability as tempting and urgent targets for retaliatory or preemptive attack by the Soviets (or others) commits the U.S. to the possibility of nuclear escalation just as much as does their own capability to launch nuclear strikes. Exactly the same is true for the presence in Europe of the far-from-invulnerable Pershing and cruise missiles (or, on the Soviet side, SS-20s), which makes quite realistically credible the prospect of escalation by one side or the other from a Middle East conflict to the heart of Europe.

And it is not only from the Middle East that a regional nuclear conflict can "spill over" into Europe; *all* the non-Soviet targets of U.S. nuclear warnings in the list above were allies or clients of the Soviet Union, and the possibility of such spill-over (e.g., by Soviet retaliation against Berlin or U.S. missiles in Turkey, or against Japan) was vividly present in the minds of U.S. planners, even in the bygone era of U.S. superiority.¹¹

Carter and Reagan are right; their policy cannot safely be regarded by the Russians, or anyone else, as mainly bluff. To make first-use warnings in a world so loaded with nuclear weapons that both threaten and invite preemption is *really* to play Russian roulette, with a gun pointed at the heads of all our children. It was thirty years ago that their White House predecessors pioneered an essentially terrorist strategy based on threats of regional genocide: the indiscriminate, massive slaughter of innocents foreseeable even in the most "limited" one-sided nuclear war. Their own current pursuit of superiority—in the face of present parity and of Soviet efforts to maintain it—is intended to prolong that strategy into an era when such threats are vastly more dangerous than before: likely now to be suicidal as well as genocidal, yet more likely to be challenged, and then, to be carried out. For their deliberate arms policies are effectively committing, making it likely that sooner or later—unless U.S. threats always work perfectly, which they will not—a U.S. president will turn a non-nuclear conflict into a nuclear one, or a local nuclear exchange into a global one.

The whole panoply of new arms and deployments, the "usable" neutron warhead and the Rapid Deployment Force to the Pershings and the MX, serve to implement presidential claims to have wired up the Middle East to a Doomsday Machine, in the same way Iranian captors of American hostages in Teheran claimed to have wired the U.S. Embassy for total demolition in the event of attack.

It is not reassuring to recall that the latter warning did not, in fact, deter President Carter from launching a "rescue" raid, despite official estimates that it would cost the lives of some and perhaps most of the hostages. (They all lived to come home, after all, only by an "act of Allah" in the form of a sandstorm, which did not, however, spare the lives of all the raiders.)

Nevertheless, such threats can work, and in the larger case as well. The Russians may not tread, in some future year of crisis, on the nuclear tripwires that have been laid around their present zone of occupation, protecting "our" oil in the Middle East. But the scale of risk is different. By the Carter/Reagan policy, every human life in the Middle East and every city in the northern hemisphere is held hostage.

Even when such a policy is challenged, the demolitions *may* not be triggered. But the historical political conditions for that deserve to be studied. The one clear example among past nuclear crises is the failure of Nixon's direct, secret threats to the Hanoi regime in 1969. As H. R. Haldeman has revealed (see note 11), Henry Kissinger conveyed the warning to the Vietnamese that Nixon would escalate the war massively, including the possible use of nuclear weapons, if they did not accept his terms, which Nixon describes in his memoirs as his "November ultimatum." Roger Morris, who worked on these escalation plans under Kissinger, reports seeing the actual mission folders, including photographs, for the nuclear targets recommended to the president; one of them was a railhead in North Vietnam a mile and a half from the Chinese border. Hanoi never did accept the terms of Nixon's ultimatum; and Nixon's discussion and his later actions indicate strongly that it was not a bluff. Why then was the escalation not carried out?

Nixon himself gives the reason, one only, in his memoirs.

There were too many Americans on the streets, demonstrating nonviolently against the war, on October 15, and again on November 15, 1969, the days of the Vietnam Moratorium actions and the Washington March Against Death, which happened to straddle his secret November 1 ultimatum. Nixon realized by October 16, he reports, that the protest movement had so "polarized" public opinion that he would not have sufficient support for his planned escalation. As he saw it, the antiwar movement had kept him from ending the war—his way—his first year in office. From another point of view, the protest actions—whose actual power and effect Nixon kept at the time as secret from the public as his ultimatum—has prolonged the moratorium on the combat use of nuclear weapons by a dozen years so far.

But presidents learn, too, from such setbacks. In the era of parity (which had arrived a few years before Nixon took office) public support for nuclear threats is both harder to come by and more necessary—if the threat is to work—than in the golden age of U.S. near-monopoly. A demonstration, in advance, of public support of the threat policy seems now almost essential to its prospects of success (as well as to containing the political risks if it should fail). Following the onset of the emotional hostage crisis, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan provided a near-perfect occasion for Carter to bid for this public support, which had become urgent, in White House eyes, almost a year earlier with the fall of the Shah as protector of U.S. interests in the Gulf. (Almost equally ominous for the prospects of client dictators of the U.S. was the triumph of liberation forces over Somoza a few months later, July 19, 1979, in Nicaragua.)

By deliberately making public what the Soviets had undoubtedly always regarded as sufficiently obvious implicit threats of nuclear initiatives to preserve U.S. influence in the Gulf oil regions, Carter was also acting to legitimize such threats in future cases where the public was less likely to perceive either an urgent threat from a rival superpower or a "vital national interest." Such threats would be used primarily, as in the past, against adversaries who did not yet have any nuclear weapons

with which to retaliate: in particular, to U.S. troops who were defending other Shahs and Somozas from their own people.

Before long some such threat would be called and carried out. Even if such a war, outside NATO or the Middle East, should be limited in area and intensity, it would be a precedent for other nuclear wars that eventually would escape any such limits. And the next such outbreak would not again await thirty-six years; more likely it would not take thirty-six weeks for the earliest example of nuclear first-use to be repeated, by the U.S. or others.

The onset of this fatal epoch of limited—and then less limited—nuclear wars will be hastened if the open advocacy by the White House and Pentagon of nuclear superiority, first-strike forces, and first-use threats continues to meet either a positive or a passive response. What Carter sought with his draft registration, what Reagan now seeks with his trillion-dollar-plus arms build-up, what some NATO leaders have intended by pressing the "token" deployment of Pershing and cruise missiles to Europe, are active expressions of consent and commitment from their publics, the nuclear hostages in Europe and America. It is what the Reverend Jim Jones wanted with his suicide drills in Guyana.

Jones called the practice sessions "White Nights," rehearsing his followers in the gestures of sacrificing their children and themselves, training them to react passively to his message (in the recurrent tones of every American president and every other leader of a nuclear weapons state since 1945): "Trust me. This time it's only a drill. I will decide . . . when the time has come for us to meet together on the other side; the time for the cyanide." That time finally came for Jones and his followers in mid-November 1979, just weeks before the NATO governments announced in December their decision, prepared in secret with no prior public discussion, to accept in the name of their citizens the stationing of U.S.-controlled Pershing and cruise missiles on European territory.

But in Europe, now, public consent to these preparations and rehearsals for "omnicide" is beginning to be denied. In many

parts of West Europe, in fact, more broadly than in the United States as yet, an active movement of education and protest is well past the stage of beginnings. Reacting in particular to the December 1979 decision, in Holland, Norway, Britain, West Germany, to a lesser extent Denmark and Belgium, public movements are already approaching what is required—a movement of protest and resistance on the scale of that which blocked Nixon from escalating in 1969—to restrain their national leaderships from following the catastrophic overall course proclaimed by the U.S. administration.

This book, and each of its authors, is part of that movement. Along with the "Appeal for European Nuclear Disarmament" which he initially drafted, E. P. Thompson's opening essay, in particular, has played the role of awakening that movement of Tom Paine's *Common Sense*. As a participant myself in such projects in the United States in recent years as the teach-ins and demonstrations of the Mobilization for Survival, the Continental Walk for Disarmament and Social Justice, civil disobedience at Wall Street, the Pentagon, the Department of Energy, Rocky Flats Nuclear Production Facility, and the University of California (designer of all U.S. nuclear warheads), I can testify to the existence of a variegated and growing movement against the nuclear arms race in the United States, which also includes campaigns of civil disobedience organized by Jonah House and by the Pacific Life Community, broad-based regional protests against the MX basing plans in Utah and Nevada, and massive non-compliance with draft registration. Yet it is my impression from several visits that West Europe is at this moment the focal point for effective resistance to official American-led nuclear policies, and that the current movement there is potentially an important source of energy and inspiration for Americans. Which is to say that the movement in Europe deserves close attention in America, and the essays in this book are a good place to start.

The emphasis in these papers on unilateral measures of disarmament and on nuclear-free zones in England and West Europe has little counterpart in the U.S. movement, except for the regional anti-MX activities, and (like the latter) may at first

glance seem parochial or unrealistically limited in scope to American readers: perhaps easily circumvented by national leaderships simply by changing the basing modes—putting the cruise missiles out to sea or among more compliant nationals, putting the MX missiles into Minuteman silos—without any fundamental change in the policy or its risks.

Actually, the differences in tactical focus reflect mainly different backgrounds, different national roles within the NATO alliance, and a European perspective that is simply unfamiliar to most Americans but that is important to come to understand. The immediate aims of END (European Nuclear Disarmament), in fact, logically complement objectives that have received more attention in the United States, such as a superpower freeze (a bilateral halt to the testing, production, and deployment of all new nuclear weapons and vehicles), bilateral no-first-use commitments, and sharp reduction in superpower stockpiles, leading toward the general abolition of nuclear weapons. For example, to reject the deployment of neutron warheads and Pershing and cruise missiles and to demand the removal of the U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons that now exist in West and East Europe, as END does, can be understood not only as part of the freeze demand but as calling for the effective implementation of a no-first-use commitment, since none of these forward-based weapons have much function other than first-use. What is more, the impulse to rid one's own neighborhood of the poisoned bait is a natural and appropriate basis for mobilization, if it comes to be understood within a framework of broader objectives and global concern.

We all live in Guyana now, and there is no place to run to. From Utah to Norway to east of the Urals, we must take our stand where we live, and act to protect our home and our family: the earth and all living beings. The slogan of the Dutch Interchurch Council (IKV)—"Rid the earth of nuclear weapons; let it begin in Holland"—can inspire the commitments of individuals and communities in the superpowers and other countries of the world: "Let it begin here, now, with us."

As this is being written (July 1981) more than a thousand citizens of Europe (including delegations from East Germany

and Yugoslavia) are on the road, walking from Copenhagen to Paris on a March for Peace, with the theme: "A Nuclear-free Europe, from Poland to Portugal." The symbolism of the action, launched by three women from Norway and scheduled to arrive in Paris on August 6, seems just right; without relying on jet fuel, it is moving across national boundaries, at the steady pace of humans walking, together, in contact with the earth. As they proceed, holding rallies and teach-ins at each night's stop, others are joining the march: many of them, no doubt, from among the million Dutch citizens who petitioned and demonstrated against the neutron bomb in 1978 and the million West Germans who have petitioned (the Krefelder Appel) and demonstrated against the stationing of cruise and Pershing missiles this spring of 1981.

Like Americans resisting "symbolic" draft registration or sitting on railroad tracks at Rocky Flats, these European marchers are saying with their presence on the road what the mothers and fathers at Jonestown waited too long to say, what they should have said when the cyanide shipments first arrived or at the first rehearsals for murder and suicide: "No! Not our children! This is craziness; we won't be part of it." It is none too soon to be saying this to the President/Prime Minister/Chairman Jim Jones's of the world; nor is it, yet, too late. It is mutiny time in Jonestown: the revolt of the hostages.

Notes

1. Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 256-74.

... the important feature of the bombers—to British strategy—was that it worked—or at least many Americans believed it worked. By the end of July [1948] the absence of any Soviet military countermoves to the airlift that had effectively broken the blockade of Berlin was attributed in substantial part to the deterrent effect of the "atomic-capable" bombers within range of Russian cities. (p. 260)

Even Marshall—who throughout the year had been concerned that the United States not "provoke" the Russians into military action—now expressed optimism for the future. His change in attitude had been partly motivated, he confided to Forrestal, by his belief that "the Soviets are beginning to realize for the first time that the United States would really use the atomic bomb against them in the event of war." (p. 274)

2. Press Conference, November 30, 1950. Also Truman's memoirs, *Years of Trial and Hope*, Vol. II (New York: Signet, 1965), pp. 450-51. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 472-85. (See note 14.)
3. Eisenhower's memoirs, *Mandate for Change*, Vol. I (New York: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 178-81.

In the light of my unwillingness to accept the status quo, several other moves were considered in the event that the Chinese Communists refused to accede to an armistice in a reasonable time. These possibilities differed in detail, but in order to back up any of them, we had to face several facts.

First, it was obvious that if we were to go over to a major offensive, the war would have to be expanded outside of Korea—with strikes against the supporting Chinese airfields in Manchuria, a blockade of the Chinese coast, and similar measures. . . . Finally, to keep the attack from becoming overly costly, it was clear that we would have to use atomic weapons. . . . One possibility was to let the Communist authorities understand that, in the absence of satisfactory progress, we intended to move decisively without inhibition in our use of weapons, and would no longer be responsible for confining hostilities to the Korean Peninsula. We would not be limited by any world-wide gentleman's agreement. In India and in the Formosa Straits area, and at the truce negotiations at Panmunjom, we dropped the word, discreetly, of our intention. We felt quite sure it would reach Soviet and Chinese Communist ears.

See also, Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 237-41.

According to Sherman Adams, Eisenhower's White House chief of staff (Firsthand Report, pp. 48-49),

Long afterward, talking one day with Eisenhower about the events that led up finally to the truce with Korea, I asked him what it was that brought the Communists into line.

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"Danger of an atomic war," he said without hesitation. "We told them we could not hold to a limited war any longer if the Communists welched on a treaty of truce. They didn't want a full-scale war or an atomic attack. That kept them under some control."

In the above passage of his memoirs, Eisenhower also mentions: "Meanwhile, General Mark Clark (who had succeeded Ridgway as United Nations commander) began to suspect that the Communists were building up forces in the Kaesong 'sanctuary' area. He requested permission to launch an attack in the event he became convinced that a Communist attack there was pending. This authority I thought unwise to delegate at that time" (p. 181). But recently declassified minutes of the National Security Council meeting on February 11, 1953, to which this refers, record a noteworthy exchange at this point, omitted from the memoirs:

[The President] then expressed the view that we should consider the use of tactical atomic weapons on the Kaesong area [an area of approximately twenty-eight square miles, which was according to Clark, "now chock full of troops and material"], which provided a good target for this type of weapon. In any case, the President added, we could not go on the way we were indefinitely.

General Bradley thought it desirable to begin talking with our allies regarding an end of the sanctuary, but thought it unwise to broach the subject yet of possible use of atomic weapons.

Secretary Dulles discussed the moral problem and the inhibitions on the use of the A-bomb, and Soviet success to date in setting atomic weapons apart from all other weapons as being in a special category. It was his opinion that we should try to break down this false distinction.

The President added that we should certainly start on diplomatic negotiations with our allies. To him, it seemed that our self-respect and theirs was involved, and if they objected to the use of atomic weapons we might well ask them to supply three or more divisions needed to drive the Communists back, in lieu of use of atomic weapons. In conclusion, however, the President ruled against any discussion with our allies of military plans or weapons of attack.

The corresponding discussion in Eisenhower's memoirs does raise the subject of allied attitudes (and perhaps, implicitly, those of the American public as well) in remarks that seem highly pertinent to a number of the essays that follow:

If we decided upon a major, new type of offensive, the present policies would have to be changed and the new ones agreed to by our allies. Foremost would be the proposed use of atomic weapons. In this respect American views have always differed somewhat from those of some of our allies. For the British, for example, the use of atomic weapons in war at that time would have been a decision of the gravest kind. My feeling was then, and still remains, that it would be impossible for the United States to maintain the military commitments which it now sustains around the world (without turning into a garrison state) did we not possess atomic weapons and the will to use them when necessary. But an American decision to use them at that time would have created strong disruptive feelings between ourselves and our allies. However, if an all-out offensive should be highly successful, I felt that the rifts so caused could, in time, be repaired.

Of course, there were other problems, not the least of which would be the possibility of the Soviet Union entering the war. In nuclear warfare the Chinese Communists would have been able to do little. But we knew that the Soviets had atomic weapons in quantity, and estimated that they would soon explode a hydrogen device. Of all the Asian targets which might be subjected to Soviet bombing, I was most concerned about the unprotected cities of Japan. (p. 180)

4. Prime Minister Bidault in the film *Hearts and Minds*, and in Roscoe Drummond and Gaston Coblenz, *Duel at the Brink* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 121-22. Also see, Richard Nixon's memoirs, *RN* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), pp. 150-55. As he told Drummond and Coblenz,

Bidault understood Dulles, on two separate occasions, to have offered him the use of American atomic bombs by French forces in the Indochina war.

By Bidault's account, both offers were made before the fall of Dienbienphu; prior, that is, to the Geneva Conference. According to Bidault, both offers were made to him personally by Dulles in Paris.

The first is recalled by Bidault as an offer of one or more atomic bombs to be dropped on Communist Chinese territory near the Indochina border in a countermove against the Chinese supply lines to the Vietminh Communists.

The second is recalled as an offer of two atomic bombs against the Vietminh forces at Dienbienphu.

Bidault, by his account, declined both offers. He told

Dulles that it would be impossible to predict where the use of nuclear weapons against Red China would end, that it could lead to Russian intervention and a world-wide holocaust. In the case of the second offer, he considered the French and Vietminh forces to be by then too closely engaged at Dienbienphu to permit the use of atomic weapons.

5. Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force Without War* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1978), pp. 238, 256.
6. Morton H. Halperin, *The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis: A Documented History* (formerly Top Secret), RAND Corporation Research Memorandum RM-4900-ISA, December 1966.
7. Blechman and Kaplan, *Force Without War*, pp. 343-439.
8. R. F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971). (See note 14.)
9. Blechman and Kaplan, pp. 47-49, with a table listing nineteen such incidents between November 1946, and the worldwide SAC alert of October 1973.
10. Herbert Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 86-91. Also see, General Westmoreland's memoirs, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 338.

Because the region around Khe Sanh was virtually uninhabited, civilian casualties would be minimal. If Washington officials were so intent on "sending a message" to Hanoi, surely small tactical nuclear weapons would be a way to tell Hanoi something, just as two atomic bombs had spoken convincingly to Japanese officials during World War II and the threat of atomic bombs induced the North Koreans to accept meaningful negotiations during the Korean War. It could be that use of a few small tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam—or even the threat of them—might have quickly brought the war there to an end.

Or as General Nathan Twining, U.S. air force chief of staff at the time of Dienbienphu and later elevated by Eisenhower to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recollected in tranquility:

I still think it would have been a good idea [to have taken] three small tactical A-bombs—it's a fairly isolated area, Dienbienphu—no great town around there, only Communists and their supplies. You could take all day to drop a bomb, make sure you put it in the right place. No opposition. And clean those Commies out of there and the band could play the Marseillaise and the French could march out

of Dienbienphu in fine shape. And those Commies would say, "Well, those guys might do this again to us. We'd better be careful." And we might not have had this problem we're facing in Vietnam now if we'd dropped those small A-weapons. (Dulles Oral History Project, Princeton: cited in Carl Solberg, *Riding High*, [New York: Mason & Lipscomb, 1973], p. 230)

11. H. R. Haldeman's memoirs, *The Ends of Power* (New York: Times Books, 1978), pp. 81-85, 97-98; and Richard M. Nixon's memoirs, *RN*, pp. 393-414; and personal interviews with Roger Morris and Eqlal Ahmad.

Haldeman's account:

When Nixon spoke of his desire to be a peacemaker, he was not just delivering words his listeners wanted to hear. Nixon not only wanted to end the Vietnam War, he was absolutely convinced he would end it in his first year. I remember during the campaign, walking along a beach, he once said, "I'm the one man in this country who can do it, Bob." . . .

He saw a parallel in the action President Eisenhower had taken to end another war. When Eisenhower arrived in the White House, the Korean War was stalemated. Eisenhower ended the impasse in a hurry. He secretly got word to the Chinese that he would drop nuclear bombs on North Korea unless a truce was signed immediately. In a few weeks, the Chinese called for a truce and the Korean War ended.

In the 1950s Eisenhower's military background had convinced the Communists that he was sincere in his threat. Nixon didn't have that background, but he believed his hardline anti-Communist rhetoric of twenty years would serve to convince the North Vietnamese equally as well that he really meant to do what he said. He expected to utilize the same principle of a threat of excessive force. He would combine that threat with more generous offers of financial aid to the North Vietnamese than they had ever received before. And with this combination of a strong warning plus unprecedented generosity, he was certain he could force the North Vietnamese—at long last—into legitimate peace negotiations.

The threat was the key, and Nixon coined a phrase for his theory which I'm sure will bring smiles of delight to Nixon-haters everywhere. We were walking along a foggy beach after a long day of speechwriting. He said, "I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war. We'll just slip the word to them that, for God's

sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communism. We can't restrain him when he's angry—and he has his hand on the nuclear button—and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace."

As it turned out, it wasn't Bill Rogers, the future secretary of state, who slipped the word to the North Vietnamese, but a brilliant, impulsive, witty gentleman with an engaging German accent—Henry Kissinger. (pp. 82–83)

12. References in text.
13. References in text.
14. Eisenhower's self-appointed concern (see note 3) about retaliation against "the unprotected cities of Japan" (which were, and are, of course, neither more nor less unprotected against nuclear attack than every other city in the world) if he should carry out his nuclear threats against China in 1953 would have been equally appropriate in connection with his offer of nuclear weapons for use in Indochina in 1954 and his plans for use over Quemoy in 1958. But his concern not only failed to preclude the threats and serious preparations; it did not lead him to alert the Japanese, or others including close allies, to the danger he perceived himself as imposing on them.

Immediately after Truman's announcement of U.S. consideration of nuclear weapons in Korea, December 1950, British Prime Minister Atlee flew to Washington, wishing, in Acheson's words, "Britain to be admitted to some participation with us in any future decision to use nuclear weapons," specifically an agreement "that neither of us would use these weapons without prior consultation with the other" (*Present at the Creation*, pp. 478, 484). Like other U.S. allies, Britain failed to get any such assurance, then or later.

The main effect of Atlee's "scurrying across the ocean" in response to Truman's "unfortunate" candor at his press conference (Acheson's words, in an account contemptuously patronizing of the British leader) was to make later presidents more circumspect with their nuclear threats, usually cutting out U.S. allies and the American public from knowledge of them.

Even the Cuban Missile Crisis is only a partial exception to this. In an account unique for its vividness and its authority, Robert Kennedy reports an episode in that crisis when the navy was preparing to force a Russian submarine to the surface, a few minutes which

were the time of gravest concern for the President. Was the world on the brink of a holocaust? Was it an error? A mis-

take? Was there something further that should have been done? Or not done? His hand went up to his face and covered his mouth. He opened and closed his fist. His face seemed drawn, his eyes pained, almost gray. We stared at each other across the table. For a few fleeting seconds, it was almost as though no one else was there and he was no longer the President.

Inexplicably, I thought of when he was ill and almost died; when he lost his child; when we learned that our oldest brother had been killed; of personal times of strain and hurt. The voices droned on, but I didn't seem to hear anything until I heard the President say: "Isn't there some way we can avoid having our first exchange with a Russian submarine—almost anything but that?" "No, there's too much danger to our ships. There is no alternative," said McNamara. "Our commanders have been instructed to avoid hostilities if at all possible, but this is what we must be prepared for, and this is what we must expect."

We had come to the time of final decision. "We must expect that they will close down Berlin—make the final preparations for that," the President said. I felt that we were on the edge of a precipice with no way off. . . . One thousand miles away in the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean the final decisions were going to be made in the next few minutes. President Kennedy had initiated the course of events, but he no longer had control over them. (*Thirteen Days*, p. 48)

Minutes later a messenger brought in a report that Russian ships approaching the blockade line had stopped dead in the water, and Kennedy then cancelled the intercept orders. But three days later, the Executive Committee of the NSC with the president presiding was considering an imminent U.S. air strike and invasion.

The NATO countries were supporting our position and recommending that the U.S. be firm, but, President Kennedy said, they did not realize the full implications for them. If we carried out an air strike against Cuba and the Soviet Union answered by attacking [U.S. Jupiter intermediate-range missiles—comparable to Pershing IIs—stationed in] Turkey, all NATO was going to be involved. Then, immediately, the President would have to decide whether he would use nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union, and all mankind would be threatened. . . . We had to be aware that we were deciding, the President was deciding, for the U.S., the Soviet Union, Turkey, NATO and really for all mankind. . . . (*Ibid.*, pp. 74, 77; final dots in original)

Later that evening, alone with Robert Kennedy, the president talked about the miscalculations that lead to war. War is rarely intentional. The Russians don't wish to fight any more than we do. They do not want to war with us nor we with them. And yet if events continue as they have in the last several days, that struggle—which no one wishes, which will accomplish nothing—will engulf and destroy all mankind. . . . It was not only for Americans that he was concerned, or primarily the older generation of any land. The thought that disturbed him the most, and that made the prospect of war much more fearful than it would otherwise have been, was the specter of the death of the children of this country and all the world—the young people who had no role, who had no say, who knew nothing even of the confrontation, but whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's. They would never have a chance to make a decision, to vote in an election, to run for office, to lead a revolution, to determine their own destinies. (*Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.)

These reflections had (only) the effect of leading President Kennedy to send his brother to convey an explicit, secret, forty-eight-hour ultimatum to Khrushchev through Ambassador Dobrynin, rather than simply to attack two days later without warning. According to Theodore Sorensen, "[T]he odds that the Soviets [sic] would go all the way to war," President Kennedy later said, "seemed to him then 'somewhere between one out of three and even'" (Kennedy, [New York: Harper & Row, 1965], p. 705).

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